August 13, 2009

Critical Thinking

Jan Csolak, Regina Hermann

Purpose:

Examine School Improvement Plan and calendar to determine needs and programming for 2009-10.

**Faulty Logic Play** – Decision: Jan will modify last year’s discussion sheets; Regina has the folders for each of the discussion facilitators. We will replace the old discussion sheets and any folders that were not returned and use last year’s assignments as a guide for this year’s. **IN COMMITTEE** Jan & Regina will ask committee members to assist with these and other preparatory tasks. The play is scheduled for Thursday, September 10th, 9:20 – 10:30. Soph through Senior activity is TBA.

**Continued Faculty Development** – no specifics at this time

**Curriculum Mapping** – see below for committee discussion. Decision: In committee we will share our ideas for what options exist and solicit the whole committee for ideas as well.

**Other**:

2010-11 we will assess Class of 2012 first semester with CT test and 2nd semester with Logic quiz.

**Curriculum** **Mapping and Dirty Tricks**

It was our agreement that curriculum mapping will be used in place of CT Template. Purpose of templates was to provide anecdotal evidence of how CT is addressed in the classroom. We just need to determine if we need to do anything else to establish anecdotal data. It also seems that if mapping is going to replace the CT template, the CT Standards and outcomes met through mapping should be stated. More discussion on that below.

The Critical Thinking materials includes “The Thinker’s Guide To Fallacies: The Art of Mental Trickery and Manipulation”. This guide speaks directly to our strand objective of having students identify fallacies. The Guide states that there are endless fallacies but states forty-four (44) **dirty** **tricks** of argumentation. Initially, we thought we could print a few of them each week on the back of the planner insert, but that’s being produced “back-to-back” and Jan had a different great idea anyway!

Jan idea: Have student on AM show present, in 2-3 sentences a scenario exhibiting the false argument, and then pose the question to students in homeroom, “ which fallacy best represents the faulty logic in these statements?”

Have homeroom moderators tell students to raise their hands if they think it is “A”, “B”, “C”, or “D” (displayed on the AM show monitor). The moderator tallies the “votes” for each choice and sends the data to the front office with attendance. The next day, the answer is given and at the end of the quarter, semester, or school year, the homeroom that has the best record gets a prize….or something cute like that.

Also,

Print one or more “dirty trick” on paper that is laminated and post the papers in a public location, e.g., classroom door, café, GYM, etc. Maybe instead of 44 we should just focus on the 20 that were on the Logic test or the ones that are taught in Expository Writing and in the Faulty Logic Play. Continue discussion of this in committee and decide about AM show and about laminated displays.

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Mapping discussion began with four-page CT Competency Standards that Jan and I had put together last June. We had attempted to review the booklet of Critical Thinking Standards that was purchased through the Critical Thinking Institute. There are 24 standards, each with a brief statement and paragraph each followed by statements of student outcomes. The standards are thorough. Attempting to distill an almost 60 page booklet into a manageable document is a daunting task, especially considering the detail faculty would have to examine as they mapped each course month by month. Our four-page paper only covered about fifteen of the standards. Could we get things down to a smaller block of information? Does editing out or lumping together the outcomes in a given competency standard reduce its meaning or render it meaningless?

As we considered the Nerinx Hall student outcomes, the ITSE (technology) standards, the 21st Century Learners document (Carol Winkler had provided and Apple inservice in August referenced) and the individual disciplines’ standards, it seems that it is unrealistic to expect faculty to add in these as well. However, it seems appropriate to purchase a copy of the Critical Thinking Standards for each department, and to ask them to choose one or more standards to reference in their curriculum. See an example of an ABRIDGED version of a Critical Thinking standard on next page. Continue this discussion when we can all meet. Ask people to comment on the wikispace before we meet.

Example: abridged version of Critical Thinking Standard Three:

**Standard Three: Information, Data, Evidence, and Experience**

… that all thinking is based on some data, information, evidence, experience or research. Students will:

1. express in their own words (clearly and precisely) the most important information [in a discussion, chapter, assignment, etc.).

2. Distinguish the following related but different concepts: facts, information, experience, research, data, and evidence.

3. State their evidence for a view clearly and fairly.

4. Distinguish relevant from irrelevant information when reasoning through a problem. They consider only relevant information, disregarding what is irrelevant.

5. Actively search for information against, not just for, their own position.

6. Draw conclusions only to the extent that those conclusions are supported by facts and sound reasoning. They demonstrate the ability to objectively analyze and assess information in coming to conclusions based on the information.

7. Demonstrate understanding of the difference between information and inferences drawn from that informalion. They routinely delineate information and inferences in their own and others' reasoning.

8. Demonstrate understanding of the types of information used within particular subjects and disciplines, as well as understanding of how professionals within fields use information in reasoning through problems.